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AMENDMENTS TO THE SPECIFICATION:

Please amend the specification as follows:

[0021] FIG. 3 shows one illustrative embodiment of an optical access network according to the principles of the invention. The optical access network of FIG. 3 is a ring topology network in which the optical network units 1.1, 1.2, 1.3 and 1.4 are connected in series and in which the optical line terminal 2 is connected to the first optical network unit 1.1 in the series by a unidirectional downstream optical fiber connection 11 and the last optical network unit in the series 1.4 is connected to the optical line terminal 2 by a unidirectional upstream optical fiber connection 12. However, in the optical access network shown in [FIG. 2] FIG. 3, ring protection switch 20 is interposed between the downstream optical fiber connection 11 and the first of the optical network units 1.1, between the last of the optical network units 1.4 and the upstream unidirectional optical fiber connection 12, and between the optical network units of the series. Thus, optical line terminal 2 is connected to first optical network unit 1.1 via downstream connection 11 through ring protection switch 20 and via a first local downstream optical fiber connection 13.1. Optical network unit 1.1 is connected to optical network unit 1.2, which is the next in the series, by a first local upstream optical fiber connection 14.1, ring protection switch 20, and a second local downstream optical fiber connection 13.2, and so on. The last optical network unit 1.4 in the series is connected to optical line terminal 2 via a last local upstream optical fiber connection 14.4, ring protection switch 20, and upstream optical fiber connection 12. Thus, none of the optical network units 1.1 to 1.4 is connected directly either to optical line terminal 2 or to any other optical network unit, but only via the ring protection switch 20.